

(A Good Foundation) 2. Faith

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen emphasizes the foundational role of faith in the Christian life, highlighting trust in God's nature and the importance of confessing His promises.

Scripture: John 1:12, Romans 10:9, Romans 10:17, Ephesians 2:8, Hebrews 11:6, Revelation 12:11

Topics: "Faith Foundations", "Repentance And Forgiveness"

Description

Zac Poonen preaches on the foundation of the Christian life, emphasizing repentance as the first part and faith as the second. Faith in God involves trusting His Word despite our feelings or others' opinions, based on the infinite love, wisdom, and power of God. Through faith, we receive God's gifts of grace, including forgiveness of sins, by simply reaching out and taking what He freely offers. The assurance of faith comes from trusting in God's promises, confessing them with our mouths, and overcoming doubt and Satan's lies by aligning our testimony with God's Word.

Transcript

Repentance is the first part of the foundation of the Christian life. Faith is the second.

To have faith in God means to trust Him and to believe what He has said in His Word, in spite of what our feelings may tell us or what other people may tell us. It's as simple as that.

Here are three facts concerning God:

He loves us infinitely;

He is absolutely wise; and

He is Almighty.

Is it difficult to believe these facts? No. Well, then it shouldn't be difficult for us to trust God with all our hearts.

When Eve listened to the voice of Satan in the garden of Eden, it was a failure of faith. She didn't believe that God's commands were for her good. She disobeyed God because she didn't have faith in His perfect love for her.

Faith to Receive God's Gifts

God has many wonderful things to give us. All His gifts are gifts of grace. But we need faith to receive those gifts.

The Bible says we are saved "by grace through faith" (Ephesians 2:8). Grace is God's Hand reaching down to us loaded with the blessings of heaven. Faith is our hand reaching up and taking those blessings from God's Hand.

God offers us the forgiveness of our sins first of all. If we have repented, then all we have to do now is reach out our hand and take what God offers us freely. We don't have to work for it or pay for it. It has already been paid for at Calvary. All we have to do now is to say, "Thank You, Father" and take it. That's faith.

When we don't take what God offers, we are actually insulting Him. We're despising His gifts. Perhaps we think that God is teasing us, the way some people tease children by stretching out their hands with gifts and then pulling their hand back just when the children reach out to take those gifts! But God isn't mean or evil, like such people. He is a loving Father. He really longs to give us good gifts.

That's why the Bible says that "without faith it is impossible to please God" - whatever else we may do (Hebrews 11:6).

If we trust God, He will not only forgive our sins, He'll set us free from sin's power as well.

How do we get faith? There's only one way. The Bible says that "faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the Word of Christ" (Romans 10:17). In other words, as we allow God to speak to us through His Word, we'll get faith. That's how our faith increases too.

Through God's Word, we know that Christ died for our sins and rose again; and that if we repent and trust in Him we can immediately receive a full and free forgiveness for our sins. The Holy Spirit then bears witness to our heart that this is true. Through this two-fold witness of God's Word and the Holy Spirit we can be absolutely sure that God has forgiven us and that we are indeed His children.

The Assurance of Faith

God wants us to have perfect assurance in our hearts that we are indeed His children. He never wants us to be in doubt about that fact.

Satan will try his best to keep us in doubt. But we need never be in doubt, for God has given us many promises in His Word to assure us.

Just look at these promises: Jesus said,

The one who comes to me I will certainly not cast outTruly, truly I say to you, the one who believes has eternal life (John 6:37, 47).

"As many as received Him (the Lord Jesus Christ), to them He gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12).

The Lord says,

I will be merciful to their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more (Hebrews 8:12).

To put our faith in God's promises can be likened to our putting our feet on a strong bridge while crossing a river. If the bridge is strong, it doesn't matter even if our feet are weak. What is strong faith then? It is trusting in a strong God and in His promises.

Our feelings are often very deceptive. We should never trust them. There's a parable of three men called Fact, Faith and Feeling who were walking one behind the other on a narrow wall. Fact walked in front and Faith walked behind him and Feeling came along at the rear. As long as Faith kept his eyes on Fact in front of him, everything went smoothly. Feeling followed behind him perfectly. But as soon as Faith turned around to see how Feeling was coming along, he tumbled and fell to his death; and Feeling fell to his death too. Fact, however kept walking along the wall undisturbed!

The lesson in the parable is obvious. God's Word consists of unchangeable facts. If our faith looks steadfastly at God's Word alone, there is no danger of our ever falling; and feelings will follow in due course. But if we begin to look at our feelings, then we can easily tumble and fall into discouragement and condemnation.

The Confession of Faith

The Bible says that we must confess what we believe.

If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation (Romans 10:9, 10).

The confession of our mouth is important. To confess God's Word means to say the same thing that God says. That shouldn't be difficult for it just means saying "Amen" ("It shall be so") to God's promises.

The first time the word 'believe' is used in Scripture is in Genesis chapter 15. There we read that God told Abram, when he was childless, that he would have as many children as the stars in the sky. And it says that "Abram believed the LORD" (verse 6). The Hebrew word for "believe" there, is "aman" from which we get the word "Amen", meaning "It shall be so." So all that Abram did was to say "Amen" to God's promise.

That is what true faith is - saying "Amen" to God.

We read later that Abram called himself by the new name that God gave him - Abraham (which meant "the father of a multitude"). Sarah, his wife was still childless. But that didn't make any difference to Abraham. He still called himself the father of a multitude, because he believed what God had said (Genesis 17:5).

That is the confession of faith - confessing what God has said, even when we haven't seen the fulfillment of the promise.

That's all that God asks us to do - to say the same thing that He has said in His Word. When we confess God's promises, we express our faith in God; and then God is able to work on our behalf.

It's by the "word of our testimony" that we overcome Satan (Revelation 12:11). Satan, the accuser, is always trying to rob us of the assurance of our salvation and of our boldness before God. We must quote the promises of God directly to Satan if we want to overcome him.

Jesus Himself overcame Satan by quoting Scripture to him, saying "It is written....It is written....It is written" (Matthew 4:1-11).

If we doubt God's Word, we make God a liar. But when we confess God's Word to Satan, we take sides with God and His Word against Satan and his lies. In that way we also tell Satan that we believe that what God has said is true, in spite of what our circumstances and our feelings may be telling us.

This is the confession of faith.

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